

THE TWO WOMEN

THE ONE: A FOG IN SANTONE

THE OTHER: A MEDLEY OF MOODS

By O. HENRY

AUTHOR OF "CABBAGES AND KINGS," "THE FOUR
MILLION," ETC., ETC.



BOSTON
SMALL, MAYNARD AND COMPANY
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A METEOROLOGICAL SKETCH

A FOG IN SANTONE

A Meteorological Sketch

The drug clerk looks sharply at the white face half concealed by the high-turned overcoat collar.

"I would rather not supply you," he says doubtfully. "I sold you a dozen morphia tablets less than an hour ago."

The customer smiles wanly. "The fault is in your crooked streets. I did n't intend to call upon you twice, but I guess I got tangled up. Excuse me."

He draws his collar higher, and moves out, slowly. He stops under an electric light at the corner, and juggles absorbedly with three or four little pasteboard boxes. "Thirty-six," he announces to himself. "More than plenty."

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For a gray mist had swooped upon Santone that night, an opaque terror that laid a hand to the throat of each of the city's guests. It was computed that three thousand invalids were hibernating in the town. They had come from by and wide, for here, among these contracted, river-sliced streets, the goddess Ozone has elected to linger.

Purest atmosphere, sir, on earth! You might think, from the river winding through our town, that we are malarial, but, no, sir! Repeated experiments made by both government and local experts show that our air contains nothing deleterious — nothing but ozone, sir, pure ozone. Litmus paper tests made all along the river show — but you can read it all in the prospectuses; or the Santonian will recite it for you, word by word.

We may achieve climate, but weather is thrust upon us. Santone, then, cannot be

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blamed for this cold, gray fog that came and kissed the lips of the three thousand, and then delivered them to the cross. That night the tubercles, whose ravages hope holds in check, multiplied. The writhing fingers of the pale mist did not go thence bloodless. Many of the wooers of ozone capitulated with the enemy that night, turning their faces to the wall in that dumb, isolated apathy that so terrifies their watchers. On the red stream of Hemorrhagia a few souls drifted away, leaving behind pathetic heaps, white and chill as the fog itself. Two or three came to view this atmospheric wraith as the ghost of impossible joys, sent to whisper to them of the egregious folly it is to inhale breath into the lungs, only to exhale it again, and these used whatever came handy to their relief, pistols, gas or the beneficent muriate.

The purchaser of the morphia wanders

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into the fog, and, at length, finds himself upon a little iron bridge, one of the score or more in the heart of the city under which the small, tortuous river flows. He leans on the rail and gasps, for here the mist has concentrated, lying like a footpad to garrote such of the Three Thousand as creep that way. The iron bridge guys rattle to the strain of his cough, a mocking, phthisical rattle, seeming to say to him: "Clackety — clack! just a little rusty cold, sir, — but not from our river. Lit — mus paper all along the banks and nothing but ozone. Clacket — y — clack!"

The Memphis man at last recovers sufficiently to be aware of another overcoated man ten feet away, leaning on the rail, and just coming out of a paroxysm. There is a freemasonry among the Three Thousand that does away with formalities and introductions. A cough is your card; a hemor-

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rhage a letter of credit. The morphia man, being nearer recovered, speaks first.

"Goodall: Memphis — pulmonary tuberculosis — guess last stages." The Three Thousand economize on words. Words are breath, and they need breath to write checks for the doctors.

"Hurd," gasps the other. "Hurd; of T'leder. T'leder, Ah-hia. Catarrhal bronkeetis. Name's Dennis, too — doctor says. Says I'll, — live four weeks if I — take care of myself. Got your walking papers yet?"

"My doctor," says Goodall, of Memphis, a little boastingly, "gives me three months."

"Oh," remarks the man from Toledo, filling up great gaps in his conversation with wheezes, "damn the difference. What's months! Expect to — cut mine down to one week — and die in a hack — a four wheeler, not a cough. Be considerable

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moanin' of the bars when I put out to sea. I 've patronized 'em — pretty freely since I struck my — present gait. Say, Goodall, of Memphis — if your doc has set your pegs so close — why don't you — get on a big spree and go — to the devil quick and easy — like I 'm doing?"

"A spree!" says Goodall, as one who entertains a new idea, "I never did such a thing. I was thinking of another way, but —"

"Come on," invites the Ohioan, "and have some drinks. I 've been at it — for two days, but the inf — ernal stuff won't bite like it used to. Goodall, of Memphis, what 's your respiration?"

"Twenty-four."

"Daily — temperature?"

"Hundred and four."

"You can do it in two days. It'll take me a — week. Tank up, friend Goodall — have

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all the fun you can, then — off you go, in the middle of a jag, and s-s-save trouble and expense. I 'm a s-son of a gun if this ain't a health resort — for your whiskers! A Lake Erie fog 'd get lost here in two minutes."

"You said something about a drink," says Goodall.

A few minutes later they line up at a glittering bar, and hang upon the arm rest. The bartender, blonde, heavy, well-groomed, sets out their drinks, instantly perceiving that he serves two of the Three Thousand. He observes that one is a middle-aged man, well dressed, with a lined and sunken face; the other a mere boy, who is chiefly eyes and overcoat. Disguised well the tedium begotten by many repetitions, the server of drinks begins to chant the sanitary saga of Santone. "Rather a moist night, gentlemen, for our town. A little fog from our river, but nothing to hurt. Repeated tests."

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"Damn your litmus papers," gasps Toledo, — "without any — personal offence intended. We've heard of 'em before. Let 'em turn red, white and blue. What we want is a repeated test of that — whiskey. Come again. I paid for the last round, Goodall, of Memphis."

The bottle oscillates from one to the other, continues to do so, and is not removed from the counter. The bartender sees two emaciated invalids dispose of enough Kentucky Belle to floor a dozen cowboys, without displaying any emotion save a sad and contemplative interest in the peregrinations of the bottle. So he is moved to manifest a solicitude as to the consequences.

"Not on your Uncle Mark Hanna," responds Toledo, "will we get drunk. We've been — vaccinated with whiskey and — cod liver oil. What would send you to the police station — only gives us a thirst. S-s-set out another bottle."

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It is slow work trying to meet death by that route. Some quicker way must be found. They leave the saloon and plunge again into the mist. The sidewalks are mere flanges at the base of the houses; the street a cold ravine, the fog filling it like a freshet. Not far away is the Mexican quarter. Conducted as if by wires along the heavy air comes a guitar's tinkle, and the demoralizing voice of some señorita singing:

*"En las tardes sombrillos del invierno
En el prado a Morar me reclino,
Y maldigo mi fausto destino —
Una vida la mas infeliz."*

The words of it they do not understand — neither Toledo nor Memphis, but words are the least important things in life. The music tears the breasts of the seekers after Nepenthe, inciting Toledo to remark:

"Those kids of mine — I wonder — by God, Mr. Goodall, of Memphis, we had too

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little of that whiskey! No slow music in mine, if you please. It makes you disremember to forget."

Hurd, of Toledo, here pulls out his watch, and says:

"I'm a son of a gun! Got an engagement for a hack ride out to San — Pedro Springs at eleven. Forgot it. A fellow from Noo York, and me, and the Castillo sisters at Rhinegelder's Garden. That Noo York chap's a lucky dog — Got one whole lung — good for a year yet. Plenty of money, too. He pays for everything. I can't afford — to miss the jamboree. Sorry you ain't going along. Good-by, Goodall, of Memphis."

He rounds the corner and shuffles away, casting off thus easily the ties of acquaintanceship as the moribund do, the season of dissolution being man's supreme hour of egoism and selfishness. But he turns and calls back through the fog to the other: "I

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say, Goodall, of Memphis! If you get *there* before I do, tell 'em Hurd 's a comin' too. Hurd, of T'leder, Ah-hia."

Thus Goodall's tempter deserts him. That youth, uncomplaining and uncaring, takes a spell at coughing, and, recovered, wanders desultorily on down the street, the name of which he neither knows nor recks. At a certain point he perceives swinging doors, and hears, filtering between them, a noise of wind and string instruments. Two men enter from the street as he arrives, and he follows them in. There is a kind of ante-chamber, plentifully set with palms and cactuses and oleanders. At little marble-topped tables some people sit, while soft-shod attendants bring the beer. All is orderly, clean, melancholy — gay; of the German method of pleasure. At his right is the foot of a stairway. A man standing there holds out his hand. Goodall extends his, full of

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silver, and the man selects therefrom a coin. Goodall goes upstairs, and sees there two galleries extending along the sides of a concert hall which he now perceives to lie below and beyond the anteroom he had first entered. These galleries are divided into boxes or stalls which bestow, with the aid of hanging lace curtains, a certain privacy upon their occupants.

Passing, with aimless feet, down the aisle contiguous to these saucy and discreet compartments, he is half checked by the sight, in one of them, of a young woman, alone and seated in an attitude of reflection. This young woman becomes aware of his approach. A smile from her brings him to a standstill, and her subsequent invitation draws him, though hesitating, to the other chair in the box, a little table between them.

Goodall is only nineteen. There are some whom, when the terrible god Phthisis wishes

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to destroy he first makes beautiful; and the boy is one of these. His face is wax, and an awful pulchritude is born of the menacing flame in his cheeks. His eyes reflect an unearthly vista engendered by the certainty of his doom. As it is forbidden man to guess accurately concerning his fate, it is inevitable that he shall tremble at the slightest lifting of the veil.

The young woman is well dressed, and exhibits a beauty of a distinctly feminine and tender sort; an Eve-like comeliness that seems scarcely predestined to fade.

It is immaterial, the steps by which the two mount to a certain plane of good understanding; they are short and few, as befits the occasion.

A button against the wall of the partition is frequently disturbed, and a waiter comes and goes at its signal. Pensive Beauty would nothing of wine; two thick plaits of her

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blonde hair hang almost to the floor; she is a lineal descendant of the Loreley. So the waiter brings the brew; effervescent, icy, greenish-golden. The orchestra on the stage is playing "Oh, Rachel." The two youngsters have exchanged a good bit of information. She calls him "Walter," and he calls her "Miss Rosa."

Goodall's tongue is loosened, and he has told her everything about himself. About his home in Tennessee, the old pillared mansion under the oaks, the stables, the hunting; the friends he has; down to the chickens, and the box bushes bordering the walks. About his coming South for the climate, hoping to escape the hereditary foe of his family. All about his three months on a ranch; the deer hunts, the rattlers, and the rollicking in the cow camps. Then of his advent to Santone, where he has indirectly learned from a great specialist that his life's

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calendar probably contains but two more leaves. And then of this death-white, choking night which has come and strangled his fortitude, and sent him out to seek a port amid its depressing billows.

"My weekly letter from home failed to come," he told her, "and I was pretty blue. I knew I had to go before long, and I was tired of waiting. I went out and began morphine at every drug store where they would sell me a few tablets. I got thirty-six quarter-grains, and was going back to my room and take them, but I met a queer fellow on a bridge, who had a new idea."

Goodall fillips a little pasteboard box upon the table, "I put 'em all together in there."

Miss Rosa, being a woman, must raise the lid, and gave a slight shiver at the innocent-looking triturates. "Horrid things! but, those little, white bits — they could never kill one!"

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Indeed they could. Walter knew better. Nine grains of morphia! Why, half the amount might.

Miss Rosa demands to know about Mr. Hurd, of Toledo, and is told. She laughs like a delighted child. "What a funny fellow! But tell me more about your home and your sisters, Walter. I know enough about Texas and tarantulas and cowboys."

The theme is dear, just now, to his mood, and he lays before her the simple details of a true home; the little ties and endearments that so fill the exile's heart. Of his sisters, one Alice furnishes him a theme he loves to dwell upon.

"She is like you, Miss Rosa," he says. "Maybe not quite so pretty, but just as nice, and good, and —"

"There! Walter," says Miss Rosa sharply, "now talk about something else."

But a shadow falls upon the wall outside,

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preceding a big, softly treading man, finely dressed, who pauses a second before the curtains and then passes on. Presently comes the waiter with a message: "Mr. Rolfe says —"

"Tell Rolfe I'm engaged."

"I don't know why it is," says Goodall, of Memphis, "but I don't feel as bad as I did. An hour ago I wanted to die, but since I've met you, Miss Rosa, I'd like, so much, to live."

The young woman whirls around the table, lays an arm behind his neck, and kisses him on the cheek.

"You must, dear boy," she says. "I know what was the matter. It was this miserable foggy weather that has lowered your spirit and mine too — a little. But, look now!"

With a little spring she has drawn back the curtains. A window is in the wall

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opposite, and lo! the mist is cleared away. The indulgent moon is out again, revoyaging the plumbless sky. Roof and parapet and spire are softly pearl enamelled. Twice, thrice the retrieved river flashes back, between the houses, the light of the firmament. A tonic day will dawn, sweet and prosperous.

"Talk of death, when the world is so beautiful!" says Miss Rosa, laying her hand on his shoulder. "Do something to please me, Walter. Go home to your rest, and say: 'I mean to get better,' and do it."

"If you ask it," says the boy, with a smile, "I will."

The waiter brings full glasses. Did they ring? No; but it is well. He may leave them. A farewell glass. Miss Rosa says: "To your better health, Walter." He says: "To our next meeting."

His eyes look no longer into the void, but

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gaze upon the antithesis of death. His foot is set in an undiscovered country to-night. He is obedient, ready to go. "Good-night," she says.

"I never kissed a girl before," he confesses, "except my sisters."

"You did n't this time," she laughs, "I kissed you — good-night."

"When shall I see you again?" he persists.

"You promised me to go home," she frowns, "and get well. Perhaps we shall meet again — soon. Good-night." He hesitates, his hat in hand. She smiles broadly and kisses him once more, upon the forehead. She watches him far down the aisle, then sits again at the table.

The shadow falls once more against the wall. This time the big, softly stepping man parts the curtains and looks in. Miss Rosa's eye meets his, and for half a minute they remain thus, silent, fighting a battle with

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that king of weapons. Presently the big man drops the curtains and passes on.

The orchestra ceases playing suddenly, and an important voice can be heard loudly talking in one of the boxes farther down the aisle. No doubt some citizen entertains there some visitor to the town, and Miss Rosa leans back in her chair and smiles at some of the words she catches:

"Purest atmosphere — in the world — litmus paper all along — nothing hurtful — our city — nothing but pure ozone."

The waiter returns for the tray and glasses. As he enters, the girl crushes a little empty pasteboard box in her hand, and throws it in a corner. She is stirring something in her glass with her hat-pin.

"Why, Miss Rosa," says the waiter, with the civil familiarity he uses, — "putting salt in your beer this early in the night!"

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THE OTHER: A MEDLEY OF MOODS

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Alas! for the man and for the artist with the shifting point of perspective. Life shall be a confusion of ways to the one; the landscape shall rise up and confound the other.

Take the case of Lorison. At one time he appeared to himself to be the feeblest of fools; at another he conceived that he followed ideals so fine that the world was not yet ready to accept them. During one mood he cursed his folly; possessed by the other, he bore himself with a serene grandeur akin to greatness: in neither did he attain the perspective.

Generation before, the name had been "Larsen"; his race had bequeathed him its fine-strung, melancholy temperament, its saving balance of thrift and industry.

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From his point of perspective he saw himself an outcast from society, forever to be a shady skulker along the ragged edge of respectability; a denizen of *le trois-quarts de monde*, that pathetic spheroid lying between the *haut* and the *demi*, whose inhabitants envy each of their neighbors, and are scorned by both. He was self-condemned to this opinion, as he was self-exiled, through it, to this quaint southern city a thousand miles from his former home. Here he had dwelt for longer than a year, knowing but a few, keeping in a subjective world of shadows which was invaded at times by the perplexing bulks of jarring realities. Then he fell in love with a girl whom he had casually met in a cheap restaurant, and his story begins.

The Rue Chartres, in New Orleans, is a street of ghosts. It lies in the quarter where the Frenchman, in his prime, set up his

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translated pride and glory. Where, also, the arrogant Don had swaggered, and dreamed of gold and grants and ladies' gloves. Every flagstone has its grooves worn by footsteps going royally to the wooing and the fighting. Every house has a princely heartbreak; each doorway its untold tale of gallant promise and slow decay.

By night the Rue Chartres is now but a murky fissure, from which the groping wayfarer sees, flung against the sky, the tangled filigree of Moorish iron balconies. The old houses of Monsieur stand yet, indomitable against the century, but their essence is gone. The street is one of ghosts to who-soever can see them.

A faint heart-beat of the street's ancient glory still survives in a corner occupied by the *Café Carabine d'Or*. Once men gathered there to plot against Kings and to warn Presidents. They do so yet, but they are

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not the same kind of men. A brass button will scatter these; those would have set their faces against an army. Above the door hangs the sign-board, upon which has been depicted a vast animal of unfamiliar species. In the act of firing upon this monster, is represented an unobtrusive human levelling an obtrusive gun, once the color of bright gold. Now the legend above the picture is faded beyond conjecture; the gun's relation to the title is a matter of faith; the menaced animal, wearied of the long aim of the hunter, has resolved itself into a shapeless blot.

The place is known as "Antonio's," as the name, white upon the red-lit transparency, and gilt upon the windows, attests. There is a promise in "Antonio"; a justifiable expectancy of savory things in oil and pepper and wine, and, perhaps, an angel's whisper of garlic. But the rest of the name is "O'Riley." Antonio O'Riley! The *Carabine*

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d'Or is an ignominious ghost of the Rue Chartres. The café where Bienville and Conti dined, where a prince has broken bread, is become a "family restaurant."

Its customers are working men and women, almost to a unit. Occasionally you will see chorus girls from the cheaper theatres, and men who follow avocations subject to quick vicissitudes, but, at Antonio's (name rich in Bohemian promise but tame in fulfillment) manners debonair and gay are toned down to the "family" standard. Should you light a cigarette, mine host will touch you on the "arrum" and remind you that the proprieties are menaced. "Antonio" entices and beguiles from fiery legend without, but "O'Riley" teaches decorum within.

It was at this restaurant that Lorison first saw the girl. A flashy fellow, with a predatory eye, followed her in, and had advanced

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to take the other chair at the little table where she stopped, but Lorison slipped into the seat before him. Their acquaintance began, and grew, and now for two months they had sat at the same table each evening, not meeting by appointment, but as if by a series of fortuitous and happy accidents. After dining, they would take a walk together in one of the little city parks, or among the panoramic markets where exhibits a continuous vaudeville of sights and sounds. Always at eight o'clock their steps led them to a certain street corner, where she prettily but firmly bade him good-night and left him. "I do not live far from here," she frequently said, "and you must leave me go the rest of the way alone."

But now Lorison had discovered that he wanted to go the rest of the way, or happiness would depart, leaving him on a very lonely corner of life. And, at the same time

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that he made the discovery, the secret of his banishment from the society of the good laid its finger in his face and told him it must not be.

Man is too thoroughly an egoist not to be also an egotist; if he love, the object shall know it. During a lifetime he may conceal it through stress of expediency and honor, but it shall bubble from his dying lips though it disrupt a neighborhood. It is known, however, that most men do not wait so long to disclose their passion. In the case of Lorison, his particular ethics forbade him positively to declare his sentiments, but he must needs dally with the subject, and woo by innuendo, at least.

On this night, after the usual meal at the *Carabine d'Or* he strolled, with his companion, down the dim old street toward the river.

The Rue Chartres perishes in the old *Place d'Armes*. The ancient Cabildo, where

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Spanish justice fell like hail, faces it, and the cathedral, another provincial ghost, overlooks it. Its centre is a little, iron-railed park of flowers and immaculate gravelled walks, where citizens take the air of evenings. Pedestalled high above it, the General sits his cavorting steed with his face turned stonily down the river toward English Turn, whence come no more Britons to bombard his cotton bales.

Often the two sat in this Square, but tonight Lorison guided her past the stone-stepped gate, and still riverward. As they walked, he smiled to himself to think that all he knew of her (except that he loved her) was her name, Norah Greenway, and that she lived with her brother. They had talked about everything except themselves. Perhaps her reticence had been caused by his.

They came, at length, upon the levee, and sat upon a great, prostrate beam. The air

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was pungent with the dust of commerce. The great river slipped yellowly past. Across it Algiers lay, a longitudinal black bulk against a vibrant electric haze sprinkled with exact stars.

The girl was young, and of the piquant order. A certain bright melancholy pervaded her; she possessed an untarnished, pale prettiness doomed to please. Her voice, when she spoke, dwarfed her theme. It was the voice capable of investing little subjects with a large interest. She sat at ease, bestowing her skirts with the little womanly touch, serene, as if the begrimed pier were a summer garden. Lorison poked the rotting boards with his cane.

He began by telling her that he was in love with some one to whom he durst not speak of it. "And why not?" she asked, accepting swiftly his fatuous presentation of a third person of straw. "My place in the world,"

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he answered, "is none to ask a woman to share. I am an outcast from honest people; I am wrongly accused of one crime, and am, I believe, guilty of another."

Thence he plunged into the story of his abdication from society. The story, pruned of his moral philosophy, deserves no more than the slightest touch. It is no new tale, that of the gambler's declension. During one night's sitting he lost, and then had imperilled a certain amount of his employer's money, which, by accident, he carried with him. He continued to lose, to the last wager, and then began to gain, leaving the game winner to a somewhat formidable sum. The same night his employer's safe was robbed. A search was had; the winnings of Lorison were found in his room, their total forming an accusing nearness to that of the sum purloined. He was taken, tried, and, through incomplete evidence, released, smutched

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with the sinister devoirs of a disagreeing jury.

"It is not in the unjust accusation," he said to the girl, "that my burden lies, but in the knowledge that, from the moment I staked the first dollar of the firm's money, I was a criminal — no matter whether I lost or won. You see why it is impossible for me to speak of love to her, an angel of goodness and innocence."

"It is a sad thing," said Norah, after a little pause, "to think what very good people there are in the world."

"Good?" said Lorison.

"I was thinking of this superior person whom you say you love. She must be a very poor sort of creature."

"I do not understand."

"Nearly," she continued, "as poor a sort of creature as yourself."

"You do not understand," said Lorison,

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removing his hat, and sweeping back his fine, light hair. "Suppose she loved me in return, and were willing to marry me. Think, if you can, what would follow. Never a day would pass but she would be reminded of her sacrifice. I would read a condescension in her smile, a pity even in her affection, that would madden me. No. The thing would stand between us forever. Only equals should mate. I could never ask her to come down upon my lower plane."

An arc light faintly shone upon Lorison's face. An illumination from within also pervaded it; the girl saw the rapt, ascetic look; it was the face either of Sir Galahad or Sir Fool.

"Quite star-like," she said, "is this unapproachable angel. Really too high to be grasped."

"By me, yes."

She faced him suddenly. "My dear friend,

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would you prefer your star fallen?" Lorison made a wide gesture.

"You push me to the bald fact," he declared. "You are not in sympathy with my argument. But I will answer you so: if I could reach my particular star, to drag it down, I would not do so. But if it were fallen, I would pick it up, and thank Heaven for the privilege."

They were silent for some minutes. Norah shivered, and thrust her hands deep into the pockets of her jacket. Lorison uttered a remorseful exclamation.

"I'm not cold," she said, "I was just thinking. I ought to tell you something. You have selected a strange confidante. But you expect a chance acquaintance picked up in a doubtful restaurant to be an angel."

"Norah!" cried Lorison.

"Let me go on. You have told me about yourself. We have been such good friends!

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I must tell you now what I never wanted you to know. I am — worse than you are — I was on the stage — I sang in the chorus — I was pretty bad, I guess — I stole diamonds from the prima donna — they arrested me — I gave most of them up, and they let me go — I drank wine every night — a good deal — I was very wicked, but — ”

Lorison knelt quickly by her side and took her hands.

“Dear Norah,” he said exultantly. “It is you, it is you I love! You never guessed it, did you? ’T is you I meant all the time. Now I can speak. Let me make you forget the past. We have suffered; let us shut out the world, and live for each other. Norah, do you hear me say I love you?”

“In spite of — ”

“Rather say because of it. You have come out of your past noble and good. Your heart is an angel’s. Give it to me.”

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"A little while ago you feared the future too much to even speak."

"But for you; not for myself. Can you love me?"

She cast herself, wildly sobbing, upon his breast.

"Better than life — than Truth itself, than everything."

"And my own past," said Lorison, with a note of solicitude; "can you forgive and —"

"I answered you that," she whispered, "when I told you I loved you." She leaned away, and looked thoughtfully at him. "If I had not told you about myself, would you have — would you —"

"No," he interrupted, "I would never have let you know I loved you. I would never have asked you this — Norah, will you be my wife?"

She wept again.

"Oh, believe me, I am good now — I am

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no longer wicked. I will be the best wife in the world. Don't think I am — bad, any more. If you do I shall die, I shall die."

While he was consoling her, she brightened up, eager and impetuous. "Will you marry me to-night?" she said. "Will you prove it that way? I have a reason for wishing it to be to-night. Will you?"

Of one of two things was this exceeding frankness the outcome. Either of importunate brazenness, or of utter innocence. The lover's perspective contained only the one.

"The sooner," said Lorison, "the happier I shall be."

"What is there to do?" she asked. "What do you have to get? Come! you should know."

Her energy stirred the dreamer to action.

"A city directory, first," he cried gayly, "to find where the man lives who gives licenses to happiness. We will go together

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and rout him out. Cabs, cars, policemen, telephones and ministers shall aid us."

"Father Rogan shall marry us," said the girl, with ardor. "I will take you to him."

An hour later the two stood at the open doorway of an immense, gloomy brick building in a narrow and lonely street. The license was tight in Norah's hand.

"Wait here a moment," she said, "till I find Father Rogan."

She plunged into the black hallway, and the lover was left standing, as it were, on one leg, outside. His impatience was not greatly taxed. Gazing curiously into what seemed the hallway to Erebus, he was presently reassured by a stream of light that bisected the darkness; far adown the passage. Then he heard her call, and fluttered lampward, like the moth. She beckoned him through a doorway into the room whence

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emanated the light. The room was bare of nearly everything except books, which had subjugated all its space. Here and there little spots of territory had been reconquered. An elderly, bald man, with a superlatively calm, remote eye, stood by a table with a book in his hand, his finger still marking a page! His dress was sombre and appertained to a religious order. His eye denoted an acquaintance with the Perspective.

"Father Rogan," said Norah, "this is HE."

"The two of ye," said Father Rogan, "want to get married?"

They did not deny it. He married them. The ceremony was quickly done. One who could have witnessed it and felt its scope might have trembled at the terrible inadequacy of it to rise to the dignity of its endless chain of results.

Afterward, the priest spoke briefly, as if by rote, of certain other civil and legal

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addenda that either might or should, at a later time, cap the ceremony. Lorison tendered a fee, which was declined, and, before the door closed after the departing couple, Father Rogan's book popped open again where his finger marked it.

In the dark hall Norah whirled, and clung to her companion, tearful.

"Will you never, never, be sorry?"

At last she was reassured.

At the first light they reached upon the street she asked the time, just as she had each night. Lorison looked at his watch. Half-past eight.

Lorison thought it was from habit that she guided their steps toward the corner where they always parted. But, arrived there, she hesitated, and then released his arm. A drug store stood on the corner; its bright, soft light shone upon them.

"Please leave me here, as usual, to-night,"

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said Norah, sweetly. "I must — I would rather you would. You will not object? At six to-morrow evening I will meet you at Antonio's. I want to sit with you there once more. And then — I will go where you say." She gave him a bewildering bright smile, and walked swiftly away.

Surely it needed all the strength of her charm to carry off this astounding behavior. It was no discredit to Lorison's strength of mind that his head began to whirl. Pocketing his hands, he rambled vacuously over to the druggist's windows, and began assiduously to spell over the names of the patent medicines therein displayed.

A fantastic theorist urges that man may have two souls, a central one, which he inherited from the protoplasm, and which contains the essence of his nature; also an outward, or peripheral one which operates less mysteriously, being affected by externals.

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Though without adequate support, the theory lends itself to the exploring fancy. How else may we account for those radical revulsions of thought and feeling that so often seize men and women? For that patent, unpremonitory, irresistible, centrifugal human explosion which may be termed the Revolt of the Individual; the Ego in insurrection against its Cosmos?

Lorison, as soon as he had recovered his wits, proceeded along the street in an aimless fashion. After drifting for two or three squares, he flowed into a somewhat more pretentious thoroughfare, a way much frequented by him in his solitary ramblings. For here was a row of shops devoted to traffic in goods of the widest range of choice — handiworks of art, skill, and fancy, products of nature and labor from every zone.

Here, for a time, he loitered among the conspicuous windows, where was set, em-

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phasized by congested floods of light, the cunningest spoil of the interiors. There were few passers, and of this Lorison was glad. He was not of the world. For a long time he had touched his fellow man only at the gear of a bevelled cog-wheel—at right angles, and upon a different axis. He had dropped into a distinctly new orbit. The stroke of ill fortune had acted upon him, in effect, as a blow delivered upon the apex of a certain ingenious toy, the musical top, which, when thus buffeted whilst spinning, gives forth, with scarcely retarded motion, a complete change of key and chord.

Thus he had moved for a year under the dominion of his peripheral soul, contemplating life from a new point of view.

Strolling along the pacific avenue, he experienced a singular, supernatural calm, accompanied by an unusual activity of brain. Reflecting upon recent affairs, he assured

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himself of his happiness in having won for a bride the one he had so greatly desired, yet he wondered mildly at his dearth of active emotion. Her strange behavior in abandoning him without valid excuse on his bridal eve aroused in him only a vague and curious speculation. Again, he found himself contemplating, with complacent serenity, the incidents of her somewhat lively career. His perspective seemed to have been queerly shifted.

As he stood before a window near a corner, his ears were assailed by a waxing clamor and commotion. He stood close to the window to allow passage to the cause of the hubbub — a procession of human beings, which rounded the corner and headed in his direction. He perceived a salient hue of blue and a glitter of brass about a central figure of dazzling white and silver, and a ragged wake of black, bobbing figures.

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Two ponderous policemen were conducting between them a woman dressed as if for the stage in a short, white, satiny skirt reaching to the knee, pink stockings, and a sort of sleeveless bodice bright with reluctant, armor-like scales. Upon her curly, light hair was perched, at a rollicking angle, a shining tin helmet. The costume was to be instantly recognized as one of those amazing conceptions to which competition has harried the inventor of the spectacular ballet. One of the officers bore a long cloak upon his arm, which, doubtless, had been intended to veil the candid attractions of their effulgent prisoner, but, for some reason, it had not been called into use, to the vociferous delight of the tail of the procession.

Compelled by a sudden and vigorous movement of the woman, the parade halted before the window by which Lorison stood. He saw that she was young, and, at the first glance,

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was deceived by a sophistical prettiness of her face, which waned before a more judicious scrutiny. Her look was bold and reckless, and, upon her countenance, where yet the contours of youth survived, were the finger marks of old age's credentialled courier, Late Hours.

The young woman fixed her unshrinking gaze upon Lorison, and called to him in the voice of the wronged heroine in straits.

"Say! you look like a good fellow; come and put up the bail, won't you? I've done nothing to get pinched for. It's all a mistake. See how they're treating me! You won't be sorry, if you'll help me out of this. Think of your sister or your girl dragged along the streets this way! I say, come along, now, Charlie."

It may be that Lorison, in spite of the unconvincing pathos of this appeal, showed a sympathetic face, for one of the officers left the woman's side and went over to him.

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"It 's all right, sir," he said, in a husky, confidential tone, "she 's the right party. We took her after the first act at the Green Light Theatre, on a wire from the Chief of Police of Chicago. It's only a square or two to the station. Her rig's pretty bad, but she refused to change clothes — or rather," added the officer, with a smile, "to put on some. I thought I 'd explain matters to you, so you would n't think she was being imposed upon."

"What is the charge?" asked Lorison.

"Grand larceny. Diamonds. Her husband is a jeweller in Chicago. She cleaned his showcase of the sparklers, and skipped with a comic opera troupe."

The policeman, perceiving that the interest of the entire group of spectators was centred upon himself and Lorison — their conference being regarded as a possible new complication — was fain to prolong the situa-

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tion (which reflected his own importance) by a little afterpiece of philosophical comment.

"A gentleman like you, sir," he went on, affably, "would never notice it, but it comes in my line to observe what an immense amount of trouble is made by that combination—I mean the stage, diamonds, and light-headed women who are n't satisfied with good homes. I tell you, sir, a man these days and nights wants to know what his women folks are up to."

The policeman smiled a good-night, and returned to the side of his charge, who had been intently watching Lorison's face during the conversation, no doubt for some indication of his intention to render succor. Now, at the failure of the sign, and at the movement made to continue the ignominious progress, she abandoned hope, and addressed him thus, pointedly.

"You damn chalk-faced quitter! You was

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thinking of giving me a hand, but you let the cop talk you out of it the first word. You're a dandy to tie to. Say! if you ever get a girl she'll have a picnic. Won't she work you to the queen's taste — Oh, my!" she concluded with a taunting, shrill laugh that rasped Lorison like a saw. The policeman urged her forward; the delighted train of gaping followers closed up the rear; and the captive Amazon, accepting her fate, extended the scope of her maledictions so that none in hearing might seem to be slighted.

Then there came upon Lorison an overwhelming revulsion of his ego. It may be that he had been ripe for it, that the abnormal condition of mind in which he had for so long existed was already about to revert to its balance; however, it is certain that the events of the last few minutes had furnished the channel, if not the impetus for the change.

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The initial determining influence had been so small a thing as the fact and manner of his having been approached by the officer. That agent had, by the style of his accost, restored the loiterer to his former place in society. In an instant he had been transformed from a somewhat rancid prowler along the fishy side streets of gentility into an honest gentleman, with whom even so lordly a guardian of the peace might agreeably exchange the compliments.

This, then, first broke the spell, and set thrilling in him a resurrected longing for the fellowship of his kind, and the rewards of the virtuous. To what end, he vehemently asked himself, was this fanciful self-accusation, this empty renunciation, this moral squeamishness through which he had been led to abandon what was his heritage in life, and not beyond his deserts? Technically he was uncondemned; his sole guilty spot was

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in thought rather than deed, and cognizance of it unshared by others. For what food, moral or sentimental, did he slink, retreating like the hedgehog from his own shadow, to and fro in this musty Bohemia that lacked even the picturesque?

But the thing that struck home, that hurled his peripheral soul (to continue the fantasy) from its province, and restored his hereditary entity, and set him raging, was the part played by the Amazonian prisoner. To the counterpart of that astounding belligerent — identical, at least, in the way of experience — to one, by her own confession, thus far fallen, had he, not three hours since, been united in marriage. How desirable and natural it had seemed to him then, and how monstrous it seemed now! How the words of diamond thief Number Two yet burned in his ears — “If you ever get a girl, she ’ll have a picnic.” What did

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that mean but that women instinctively knew him for one they could hoodwink? Still again: there reverberated the policeman's sapient contribution to his agony — "A man these days and nights wants to know what his women folks are up to." Oh, yes; he had been a fool; he had looked at things from the wrong standpoint.

But, the wildest note in all the clamor was struck by Pain's fore-finger jealousy. Now, at last, he felt that keenest sting — a mounting love unworthily bestowed. Whatever she might be, he loved her; he bore in his own breast his doom. A grating, comic flavor to his predicament struck him suddenly, and he laughed creakingly as he swung down the echoing pavement. An impetuous desire to act, to battle with his fate, seized him. He stopped upon his heel, and smote his palms together triumphantly. His wife was — where? — but there was a tangible

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link; an outlet more or less navigable, through which his derelict ship of matrimony might yet be safely towed — the priest!

Like all imaginative men with pliable natures, Lorison was, when thoroughly stirred, apt to become tempestuous. With a high and stubborn indignation upon him, he retraced his steps to the intersecting street by which he had come. Down this he hurried to the corner where he had parted with — an astringent grimace tintured the thought — his wife. Thence still back he harked, following through an unfamiliar district his stimulated recollections of the way they had come from that preposterous wedding. Many times he went abroad, and nosed his way back to the trail, furious.

At last, when he reached the dark, calamitous building in which his madness had culminated, and found the black hallway, he dashed down it, perceiving no light nor sound.

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But he raised his voice, hailing loudly, reckless of everything but that he should find the old mischief-maker with the eyes that looked too far away to see the disaster he had wrought. The door opened, and in the stream of light Father Rogan stood, his book in hand, with his finger marking the place.

"Ah," cried Lorison. "You are the man I want. I had a wife of you a few hours ago. I would not trouble you, but I neglected to note how it was done. Will you oblige me with the information whether the business is beyond remedy?"

"Come inside," said the priest; "there are other lodgers in the house who might prefer sleep to even a gratified curiosity."

Lorison entered the room and took the chair offered him. The priest's eyes looked a courteous interrogation.

"I must apologize again," said the young

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man, "for so soon intruding upon you with my marital infelicities, but, as my wife has neglected to furnish me with her address, I am deprived of the legitimate resource of a family row."

"I am quite a plain man," said Father Rogan, pleasantly; "but I do not see how I am to answer your questions."

"Pardon my indirectness," said Lorison, "I will ask one. In this room to-night you pronounced me a husband. You afterwards spoke of additional rites or performances that either should or could be effected. I paid little attention to your words then, but I am hungry to hear them repeated now. As matters stand, am I married past all help?"

"You are as legally and firmly bound," said the priest, "as if it had been done in a cathedral in the presence of thousands. The additional observances I referred to are not necessary to the strictest legality of the act,

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but were advised as a precaution for the future — for convenience of proof in such contingencies as wills, inheritances, and the like."

Lorison laughed harshly.

"Many thanks," he said. "Then there is no mistake, and I am the happy benedick. I suppose I should go stand upon the bridal corner, and when my wife gets through walking the streets she will look me up."

Father Rogan regarded him calmly.

"My son," he said, "when a man and woman come to me to be married I always marry them. I do this for the sake of other people whom they might go away and marry if they did not marry each other. As you see, I do not seek your confidence; but your case seems to me to be one not altogether devoid of interest. Very few marriages that have come to my notice have brought such well-expressed regret within so short

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a time. I will hazard one question — were you not under the impression that you loved the lady you married, at the time you did so?"

"Loved her!" cried Lorison, wildly, "never so well as now, though she told me she deceived, and sinned, and stole. Never more than now, when, perhaps, she is laughing at the fool she cajoled and left, with scarcely a word, to return to God only knows what particular line of her former folly."

Father Rogan answered nothing. During the silence that succeeded he sat, with a quiet expectation beaming in his full, lambent eye.

"If you would listen —" began Lorison. The priest held up his hand.

"As I hoped," he said. "I thought you would trust me. Wait but a moment." He brought a long clay pipe, filled, and lighted it.

"Now, my son," he said.

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Lorison poured a twelvemonth's accumulated confidence into Father Rogan's ear. He told all, not sparing himself nor omitting the facts of his past, the events of the night, nor his disturbing conjectures and fears.

"The main point," said the priest, when he had concluded, "seems to me to be this — are you reasonably sure that you love this woman whom you have married?"

"Why," exclaimed Lorison, rising impulsively to his feet — "why should I deny it! But, look at me; am I fish or fowl? That is the main point to me, I assure you."

"I understand you," said the priest, also rising, and laying down his pipe. "The situation is one that has taxed the endurance of much older men than you — in fact, especially much older men than you. I will try to relieve you from it, and this night. You shall see for yourself into exactly what predicament you have fallen, and how you

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shall, possibly, be extricated. There is no evidence so credible as that of the eyesight."

Father Rogan moved about the room, and donned a soft black hat. Buttoning his coat to his throat, he laid his hand on the door knob. "Let us walk," he said.

The two went out upon the street. The priest turned his face down it, and Lorison walked with him through a squalid district, where the houses loomed, awry and desolate looking, high above them. Presently they turned into a less dismal side street, where the houses were smaller, and, though hinting of the most meagre comfort, lacked the concentrated wretchedness of the more populous by-ways.

At a segregated, two-story house Father Rogan halted and mounted the steps with the confidence of a familiar visitor. He ushered Lorison into a narrow hallway, faintly lighted by a cobwebbed hanging

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lamp. Almost immediately a door to the right opened, and a dingy Irishwoman protruded her head.

“Good evening to ye, Mistress Geehan,” said the priest, unconsciously, it seemed, falling into a delicately flavored brogue; “and is it yourself can tell me if Norah has gone out again, the night, maybe?”

“Oh, it’s yer blessid Riverence! Sure and I can tell ye the same. The purty darlin’ wint out as usual, but a bit later. And she says: ‘Mother Geehan,’ says she, ‘it’s me last noight out, praise the saints! this noight is.’ And, yer Riverence, the swate, beautiful drame of a dress she had this toime! White satin, and silk, and ribbons, and lace about the neck and arrums — ’T was a sin, yer Riverence, the goold was spint upon it.”

The priest heard Lorison catch his breath painfully, and a faint smile flickered across his own clean-cut mouth.

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"Well, then, Mistress Geehan," said he, "I'll just step upstairs and see the bit boy for a minute, and I'll take this gentleman up with me."

"He's awake, thin," said the woman. "I've just come down from sitting wid him the last hour, tilling him fine shtories of ould county Tyrone. 'T is a greedy gossoon it is, yer Riverence, for me shtories."

"Small the doubt," said Father Rogan. "There's no rocking would put him to slape the quicker, I'm thinking."

Amid the woman's shrill protest against the retort, the two men ascended the steep stairway. The priest pushed open the door of a room near its top.

"Is that you, already, sister?" drawled a sweet, childish voice from the darkness.

"It's only ould Father Denny come to see ye, darlin', and a foine gintleman I've brought to make ye a gr-r-rand call. And ye

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recaves us fast aslape in bed! Shame on yez manners!"

"Oh, Father Denny, is that you? I'm glad. And will you light the lamp, please? It's on the table by the door. And quit talking like Mother Geehan, Father Denny."

The priest lit the lamp, and Lorison saw a tiny, towzled-haired boy with a thin, delicate face, sitting up in a small bed in a corner. Quickly, also, his rapid glance considered the room and its contents. It was furnished with more than comfort, and its adornments plainly indicated a woman's discerning taste. An open door beyond revealed the blackness of an adjoining room's interior.

The boy clutched both of Father Rogan's hands. "I'm so glad you came," he said, "but why did you come in the night? Did sister send you?"

"Off wid ye! Am I to be sent about, at me

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age, as was Terence McShane, of Ballymahone? I came on me own r-r-responsibility."

Lorison had also advanced to the boy's bedside. He was fond of children; and the wee fellow, laying himself down to sleep alone in that dark room, stirred his heart.

"Are n't you afraid, little man?" he asked, stooping down beside him.

"Sometimes," answered the boy, with a shy smile, "when the rats make too much noise. But nearly every night when sister goes out, Mother Geehan stays a little while with me, and tells me funny stories. I'm not often afraid, sir."

"This brave little gentleman," said Father Rogan, "is a scholar of mine. Every day from half-past six to half-past eight — when sister comes for him — he stops in my study, and we find out what's in the inside of books. He knows multiplication, division, and frac-

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tions; and he's throubling me to begin wid the Chronicles of Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, Cormac McCullenan, and Cusan O'Lochain, the gr-r-reat Irish hithorians." The boy was evidently accustomed to the priest's Celtic pleasantries. A little, appreciative grin was all the attention the insinuation of pedantry received.

Lorisc, to have saved his life could not have put to the child one of those vital questions that were wildly beating about, unanswered, in his own brain. The little fellow was very like Norah; he had the same shining hair and candid eyes.

"Oh, Father Denny," cried the boy, suddenly, "I forgot to tell you! Sister is not going away at night any more! She told me so when she kissed me good-night as she was leaving. And she said she was so happy, and then she cried. Was n't that queer? But I'm glad; are n't you?"

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"Yes, lad. And now, ye omadhaun, go to sleep, and say good-night; we must be going."

"Which shall I do first, Father Denny?"

"Faith, he's caught me again! Wait till I get the sassenach into the annals of Tager-nach, the hagiographer; I'll give him enough of the Irish idiom to make him more respectful."

The light was out, and the small, brave voice bidding them good-night from the dark room. They groped down stairs, and tore away from the garrulity of Mother Geehan.

Again the priest steered them through the dim ways, but this time in another direction. He was serenely silent, and Lorison followed his example to the extent of seldom speaking. Serene he could not be. His heart beat suffocatingly in his breast. The following of the blind, menacing trail was pregnant with he knew not what humiliating revelation to be delivered at its end.

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They came into a more pretentious street, where trade, it could be surmised, flourished by day. And again the priest paused; this time before a lofty building whose great doors and windows in the lowest floors were carefully shuttered and barred. Its higher apertures were dark, save in the third story, the windows of which were brilliantly lighted. Lorison's ear caught a distant, regular, pleasing thrumming, as of music above. They stood at an angle of the building. Up, along the side nearest them, mounted an iron stairway. At its top was an upright, illuminated parallelogram. Father Rogan had stopped, and stood musing.

"I will say this much," he remarked thoughtfully, "I believe you to be a better man than you think yourself to be, and a better than I thought some hours ago. But do not take this" — he added, with a smile — "as much praise. I promised you a possi-

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ble deliverance from an unhappy perplexity. I will have to modify that promise. I can only remove the mystery that enhanced that perplexity. Your deliverance depends upon yourself. Come."

He led his companion up the stairway. Half way up, Lorison caught him by the sleeve. "Remember," he gasped, "I love that woman."

"You desired to know."

"I — go on."

The priest reached the landing at the top of the stairway. Lorison, behind him, saw that the illuminated space was the glass upper half of a door opening into the lighted room. The rhythmic music increased as they neared it; the stairs shook with the mellow vibrations.

Lorison stopped breathing when he set foot upon the highest step, for the priest stood aside, and motioned him to look through the glass of the door.

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His eye, accustomed to the darkness, met first a blinding glare, and then he made out the faces and forms of many people, amid an extravagant display of splendid robes — billowy laces, brilliant-hued finery, ribbons, silks, and misty drapery. And then he caught the meaning of that jarring hum, and he saw the tired, pale, happy face of his wife bending, as were a score of others, over her sewing-machine, toiling, toiling. Here was the folly she pursued, and the end of his quest.

But not his deliverance; though, even then, remorse struck him. His shamed soul fluttered once more before it retired to make room for the other and better one. For, to temper his thrill of joy, the shine of the satin and the glimmer of ornaments recalled the disturbing figure of the bespangled Amazon, and the base duplicate histories lit by the glare of footlights and stolen diamonds. It

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is past the wisdom of him who only sets the scenes, either to praise or blame the man. But this time his love overcame his scruples. He took a quick step, and reached out his hand for the door knob. Father Rogan was quicker to arrest it, and draw him back.

“You use my trust in you queerly,” said the priest, sternly, “what are you about to do?”

“I am going to my wife,” said Lorison.
“Let me pass.”

“Listen,” said the priest, holding him firmly by the arm. “I am about to put you in possession of a piece of knowledge of which, thus far, you have scarcely proved deserving. I do not think you ever will; but I will not dwell upon that. You see, in that room, the woman you married, working for a frugal living for herself, and a generous comfort for an idolized brother. This building belongs to the chief costumer of

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the city. For months the advance orders for the coming Mardi Gras festivals have kept the work going day and night. I, myself, secured employment here for Norah. She toils here each night from nine o'clock until daylight, and, besides, carries home with her some of the finer costumes requiring more delicate needlework, and works there part of the day. Somehow, you two have remained strangely ignorant of each other's lives. Are you convinced now that your wife is not walking the streets?"

"Let me go to her," cried Lorison, again struggling, "and beg her forgiveness."

"Sir," said the priest, "do you owe me nothing? Be quiet. It seems so often that Heaven lets fall its choicest gifts into hands that must be taught to hold them. Listen again. You forgot that repentant sin must not compromise, but look up, for redemption, to the purest and best. You went to her

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with the fine-spun sophistry that peace could be found in a mutual guilt; and she, fearful of losing what her heart so craved, thought it worth the price to buy it with a desperate, pure, beautiful lie. I have known her since the day she was born; she is as innocent and unsullied in life and deed as a holy saint. In that lowly street where she dwells, she first saw the light, and she has lived there ever since, spending her days in generous self-sacrifice for others. Och! ye spalpeen," continued Father Rogan, raising his finger in kindly anger at Lorison, "what for, I wonder, could she be afther making a fool of herself, and shammin' her swate soul with lies for the likes of yez!"

"Sir," said Lorison, trembling, "say what you please of me. Doubt it as you must, I will yet prove my gratitude to you, and my devotion to her. But let me speak to her

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once now; let me kneel for just one moment at her feet, and — ”

“Tut, tut,” said the priest. “How many acts of a love drama do you think an old bookworm like me capable of witnessing? Besides, what kind of figures do we cut, spying upon the mysteries of midnight millinery! Go to meet your wife to-morrow, as she ordered you; and obey her thereafter, and maybe, sometimes I shall get forgiveness for the part I have played in this night’s work. Off wid yez down the shtairs, now! ’T is late, and an ould man like me should be takin’ his rist.”